

House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, over the next 2 days we Members of Congress will have the opportunity to hear from a bright and dedicated group of high school students from the State of Colorado. These students are Members of an organization called SAFE Colorado, or Safe Alternatives to the Firearms Epidemic. This group formed in the aftermath of the Columbine High School tragedy, and they are here in Washington, D.C., to encourage Congress to pass laws to keep guns out of the hands of juveniles and criminals.

While these SAFE students are here, I urge that all Members listen to what they have to say. I have visited numerous high schools in my district, and what I have learned is that these young women and men know their schools better than anyone else in their communities and certainly better than any of us here in the Congress. We can all learn from their experience and advice.

Additionally, these young men and women do not care about politics or posturing. Instead, they care about whether they are going to be safe in their schools. As a father of two children in the public schools, I understand their concerns. The tragedy at Columbine High School has deepened my commitment to measures to make our communities safer and our schools safer.

Gun laws are not the only answer, but I think they are a crucial part of the equation. I hope the House will have the wisdom to listen to these students and pass sensible gun safety measures that our colleagues in the Senate have already endorsed.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to these brave and conscientious young people from Colorado. I wish them a safe trip, and I wish them success in convincing the Congress to act to curtail gun violence in America today. The vast majority of Coloradans and Americans support sensible gun safety laws and so should we.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM ACT OF 1999

(Mr. CALVERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wholeheartedly endorse the Financial Freedom Act of 1999, legislation sponsored by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARCHER) to provide broad-based tax relief to help individuals and families make ends meet. This is common sense legislation that will not only bring tax relief to all Americans but also prevent special interests in Washington from spending the budget surplus on a myriad of unnecessary new government programs.

I particularly support the inclusion of death tax relief. The death tax has robbed millions of Americans, especially our Nation's farmers, of their hard-earned money and their ability to

leave a legacy to their children and grandchildren. The death tax unfairly punishes those who have worked hard their entire lives to achieve the American Dream and provide a safe and secure environment for their families.

Death tax relief also will allow family businesses and farms to remain in the family, ensuring that both the business and the jobs it provides continue to live on for the next generation.

The bill of the gentleman from Texas also incrementally decreases the tax burden, eliminating it over the next 10 years. This balanced and fair approach will provide immediate relief in the short term, while not making unreasonable demands on our budget surplus.

Americans currently pay the highest taxes since World War II, and for the first time in a generation, we have the financial strength to safely return a portion of our surplus to hard-working Americans. This is solid legislation, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

HOUSE MUST PASS A MEANINGFUL MANAGED CARE REFORM BILL

(Mr. GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, during the July 4th celebrations, I had the opportunity to experience the quality health care that is offered in my own hometown of Houston, and it made me come back realizing how important a real, meaningful managed care reform bill is and what is going on in the United States Senate.

The American people have been clear to us that they want meaningful managed care reform. It is estimated that 122 million Americans do not have simple patient protections. This is not about politics, Democrat versus Republican, it is about what patients need and the providing of quality health care.

We need to eliminate gag laws. Patients need to talk to their doctor about their injuries. We need to have access to specialists and particularly make those doctors the one to define a medical necessity. We need to have an external-internal appeals process. We need to cover emergency room care instead of making someone have to decide they have to go past the closest emergency room to one on their list. They ought to get the health care they need immediately.

We should also have accountability. If the doctor making the decision is accountable and he is under law, so should the person making that decision in place of that doctor. This is not about employees suing employers. It is not about higher costs for health care. In fact, our own Congressional Budget Office and our own experience in the State of Texas shows there was little

or no cost at all in providing these protections.

Let us not lose this opportunity to help our constituents.

STATISTICS DO MATTER

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, the pollsters and political pundits tell us not to use statistics in our speeches. They tell us people's eyes glaze over at hearing the numbers. No matter. Honest statistics do matter.

When this administration came to power in 1993, the Federal Government took in 17.8 percent of our gross domestic product in taxes. Today, that share is 20.7 percent. Let us hear those numbers again, because they are important in discussing whether or not tax cuts are a good idea. They are also numbers that we will never, ever hear the other side refer to. Ever.

In 1993, when this administration came to power, the Federal taxes were 17.8 of the economy. Today, the tax burden is 20.7 percent of the economy. In other words, the Federal tax burden is at a record peacetime level.

Taxes are higher than they need to be so that Washington can spend more and more money creating new programs and expanding old ones and giving us less power and control over our lives. One-fifth of the economy in Federal taxes is just too much.

AMERICANS DO NOT WANT A FEEL-GOOD-VOTE-FOR-ME-IN-2000 TAX CUT

(Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, seems like everyone is talking about tax cuts. As a Member with a tax cut proposal before Congress, H.R. 2085, I am glad that the majority party is suddenly and somewhat frantically interested in moving forward with a tax cut proposal.

But I ask my friends in Congress to take this step forward carefully. Americans deserve a tax cut, but first they want to make sure that Social Security is solvent; and, second, they want to make sure that Medicare is there for them in the future. They do not want a tax cut that raises the national debt. And the last thing hard-working Americans do not want is a feel-good-vote-for-me-in-2000 tax cut that cannot survive a downturn in the economy.

Fiscal responsibility always seems to suffer in election years, and the 2000 election has Washington pandering. Let us stop and think about the long term before we move forward. H.R. 2085 walls off Social Security and Medicare funds, helps pay down the national debt and still gives Americans a meaningful tax cut.